2: Hickinbotham G-4, 9 (ca. 1951-ca. 1957)
1958 M341 Aden M341

The Port Trust and the Legislative Council

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"At the same time I feel it my duty to say that we realise that in the not too distant future an awakening sense of responsibility among the younger members of the community may justify Your Excellency's summons to making changes in the membership on the Unofficial side of the Council. If and when that time comes, I shall have occasion to refer to this later, we will be very willing and ready to do all that we can to co-operate. The honour of office has its undoubted attractions, just as it has its responsibilities, but these, and we trust that you will consider us among them, who really have the good and well-being of the people of the Colony at heart do not need the spur of public office to induce them to sacrifice their time and sometimes interests for the good of the community."

These may have been the words of one man, but it must be realised that they were the sentiments of all the Unofficial Members who had approved these words at a private meeting held in my office some days earlier. It was a broad enough hint for anyone, but little did I realise then that they were, in fact, addressed to myself and that it was I who was destined to be His Excellency's successor.

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I am afraid that neither the Press nor the public were much interested in our work in the Council; there was nothing spectacular, it was not "news" and not even that section of the Press which was already beginning to write of self-government in a most uninstructed manner and to put forward the claims of Arabic to be recognised as an official language, took the trouble to be present at the Reporters' table during the ordinary meetings of the Council. This does not mean that editors and reporters were absent from the official opening ceremony of each new Session of the Council; this was our one gala day of the year when the Governor, in full uniform, complete with feathers in his hat, and wearing his Orders and Decorations, with guards of honour and salutes, formally opened the new Session and delivered "the gracious Address", after handing decorations to those whom His Majesty had been graciously pleased to honour. This was quite a different state

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2: Hitchinbotham G-4, 5 (ca. 1931-ca. 1957)
1950 MSS1 Aden MSS1

of affairs; it was a spectacle, it was "news", and what was no less attractive a social occasion of the first magnitude. The élite of Aden society were there and the editors were not left out, but when the sunset had died down and the multitude departed, the editors, who were often their own reporters, were found to have gone as well.

It must not be imagined that real feeling about the political future of the Colony was non-existent. There were many people who were, in fact, seriously concerned, and a number of individuals looked forward to the time when they would be able to have a greater share in the control of their own affairs, but at that time there was nothing in the nature of a "party", as we understand the term in this country, inspired with nationalist ideas in any section of the community.

The Arab awakening was being accelerated by the rapid educational developments in the Colony and by the radio; the first a good influence, the second poisonous to young minds with its half-truths, anti-British propaganda and reports of riots and students' demonstrations, which were such a feature of those years. The first phase of this awakening was the realisation that with few exceptions the worthwhile work in the Colony was in the hands of foreigners to Aden, and the younger generation began to wonder and to ask why strangers had the cream of the employment while they had to make do with what was left. Mercifully the trade expansion after the war was creating fresh employment daily and there was work for every employable lad on leaving school, and I regret to say, very often before he should have left school. The warning did not go unheeded by the Unofficial Members of the Legislative Council and we warned Government that there would be trouble unless the rights of local men and women to priority in employment, provided they were capable of doing the work, were recognised both by Government and by the employers. The warning was heeded by Government, but not by some of the "foreign" employers who claimed, not without reason, that the local article was not up to the standard of the imported. These employers continued to take advantage of a surplus of semi-skilled workers in India, which had been

A: Middlesbrough G-45 (ca. 1931-ca. 1957)
1958 MMI Aden MMI

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actual effect the closure of the Canal must have on their own business interests. Events showed that they had good reason to be concerned. Shipping fell away rapidly. The monthly average of ships entering the port of Aden for the six months prior to the crisis, that is, from May to October 1956, was 434. In November only 277 ships used the port, and by February 1957 the number was down to 93, the lowest point to be reached. Business throughout the Colony was similarly affected and the trade with passengers, on which the merchants of Steamer Point depend for their livelihood, virtually ceased as all passenger ships were diverted round the Cape.

The finances of the Colony were dealt a blow from which they have yet to recover and whilst the immediate and, it was hoped, temporary dislocation of trade, there lurked the fear that the major Shipping Companies having once become accustomed to routing their ships by the Cape to Australia and the Far East, would continue to do so even when the Canal was open once again to world shipping. Mercifully for the Government of Aden and the trading community and all who depended upon them and the port for their living this fear proved to be groundless. Once the Canal was cleared and re-opened the volume of shipping returned to normal much earlier than had been expected by the most optimistic.

The bright side of the picture was that in spite of the divergence of views over Suez, personal relations between Government officials and their Arab friends remained unimpaired. At the same time the example of moderation shown by the local Press, in particular in the English language, was one which even the newspapers in the United Kingdom would have done well to have followed. All newspapers in Aden are Arab or Indian-owned and the two main English language papers are both Arab owned and Arab edited. All the more commendable, therefore, was their restraint during this most difficult period.

In the Protectorate the reaction was somewhat different. There was satisfaction that Her Majesty's Government had, at last, shown that they were capable of strong and determined action and with it was born a hope in the hearts of the Rulers on the Yemen frontier that it would be the turn of that country

and nine pilots. Mercantile marine matters are dealt with by the Port Officer. The present incumbent is also Superintendent of Lighthouses.

The Port has continued to thrive throughout the period and there has been a further increase in the number and tonnage of ships using the harbour. There has been an increase in the number of ships calling for the purpose of bunkering and a consequent increase in the business done by the oil supplying companies. Coal bunkering has shown the falling off noticeable in previous years.

The Aden Port Trust publishes an annual report.

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND INFORMATION OFFICE

The Public Relations and Information Office continued under the part-time supervision of the District Commissioner with an Advisory Committee representing local opinion. In accordance with their recommendations the main activity has been the showing of news and documentary films, in English and Arabic, at clubs and in public open spaces.

A regular series of Bulletins, in English and Arabic and occasionally Gujerati, was published on departmental activities and matters of local interest, and these are now issued from time to time on special topics. Regular news sheets were issued in 1949 and early in 1950, but these have now been replaced by occasional press conferences with Heads of Departments as the local Arab press is increasing in circulation and experience and becoming more qualified to give publicity to Government intentions and achievements.

There is no local broadcasting system, news and entertainment being offered direct by the B.B.C. Arabic Service and the broadcasting stations of Cairo, Delhi, Damascus, Baghdad and other Arab countries. A public address system, with loud-speakers in open spaces in the main centres of population, is used for announcements of importance.

Public reading rooms in the Colony, which had been set up by the Ministry of Information during the war, were closed as a measure of economy in 1948, but three were maintained in the Protectorate.

The routine activities of the Office which includes the supply of news reels to commercial cinemas, the distribution of periodicals to institutions and interested persons, and the provision of information services to the Aden Protectorate and Kamaran, were maintained during the year.

Chapter 4: Weights and Measures

Imperial weights and measures are the legal standard, but a number of local and Indian measures are in use, particularly the frasila, which is normally 28 lb. but varies for different commodities.